

The Relationship Between Social Media, Nutrition, and Coping Mechanisms in College Students

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Introduction

- The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between social media use and negative eating patterns including disordered eating and consumption of unhealthy foods.
- Disordered eating is defined as behavioral patterns of irregular eating, often intentionally and purposefully
- Excessive social media use has become a prevalent issue, and has been shown to negatively impact coping mechanisms and skills (Li et al., 2024)
- Excessive use of social media can result in loss of interest in hobbies, which can negatively affect emotional well being
- Social media overload increases anxiety as well as diminished self efficacy in times of crisis (Li et al., 2024)
- Comparisons from social media may lead to self objectification and an increased focus on appearance as perceived by others (Rounsefell et al., 2020)
- This poses a risk for disordered eating as well as feeling dissatisfied in your own body (Rounsefell et al., 2020)
- Body image and concerns are risk factors for eating disorders and depressive disorders (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2022)
- This study aims to assess the association between excessive social media use and disordered eating and consumption of unhealthy foods.

Hypothesis

- We hypothesized that excessive social media use will have a negative impact on eating behaviors as well as coping mechanisms

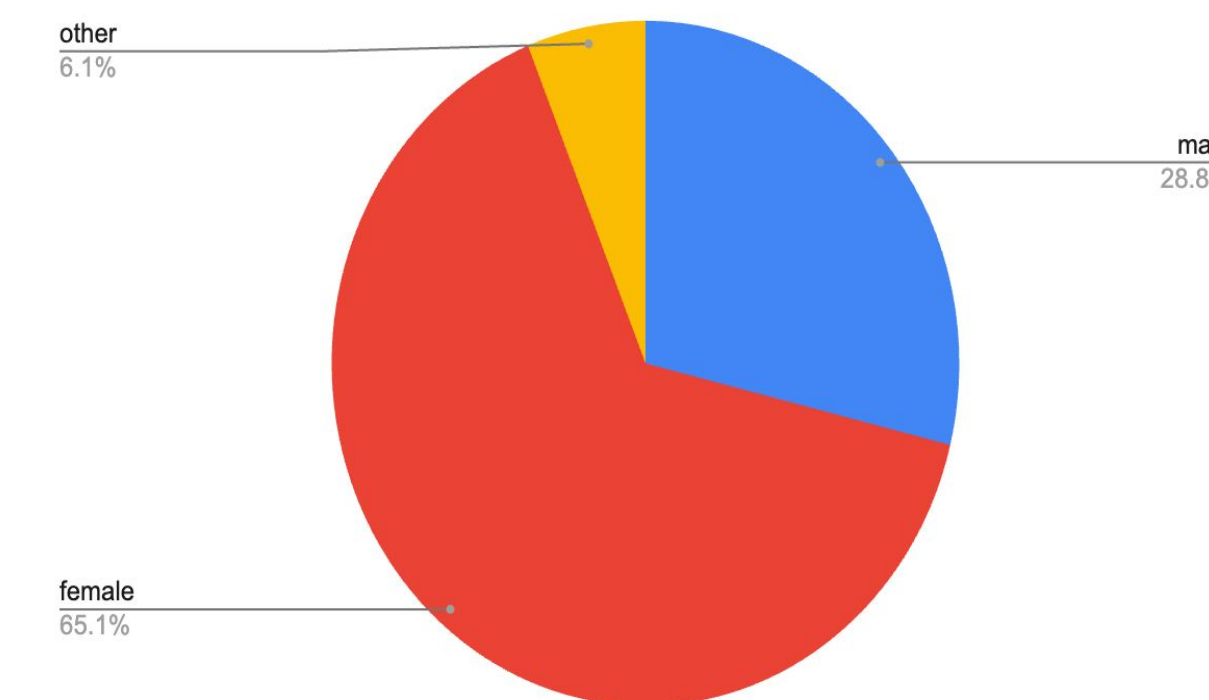
Methods

- Data was collected through an anonymous survey on Google Forms.
- A total of 805 responses were collected from participants 18 or older whom were pursuing a college education
- This questionnaire evaluated social media use, nutrition, and coping mechanisms
- The survey was distributed through outreach events at Binghamton University, as well as social media and GroupMe group chats.
- This survey used the Eating Disorder Examination - Questionnaire Short (EDE - QS), Food Mood Questionnaire (FMQ), and the Social Media Disorder (SMD) Scale
- Data were analyzed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient SPSS, Version 28.0.

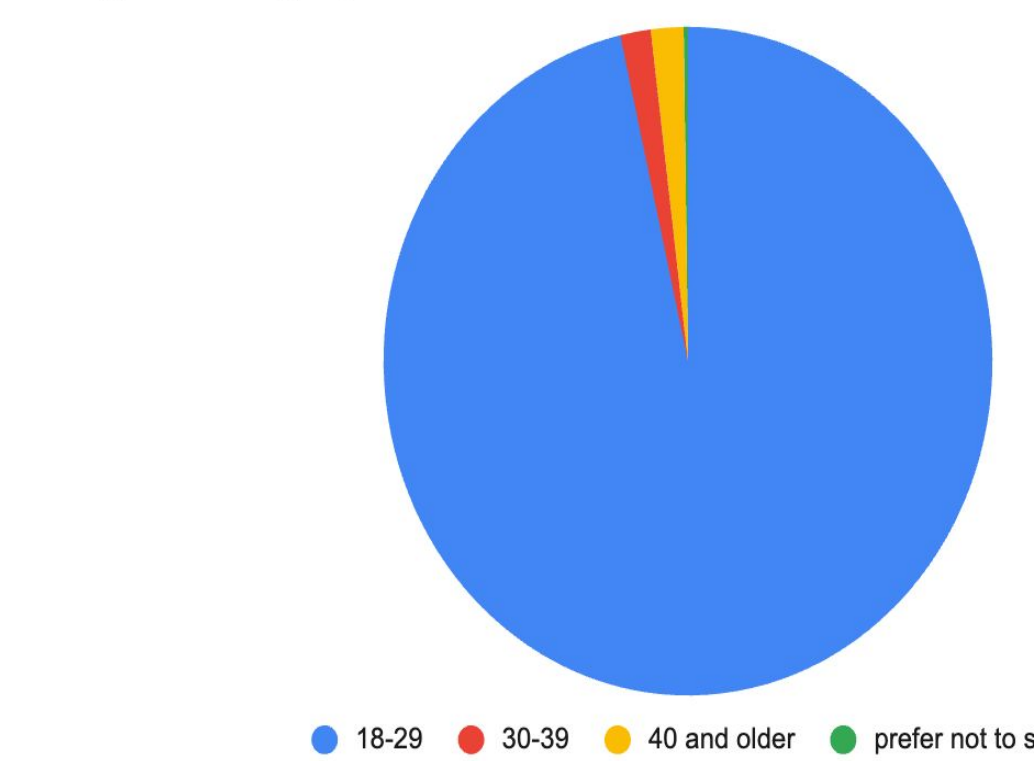
Results

805 Total Responses

Gender Demographics



Age Demographics



Consumption of Unhealthy Foods and Social Media Use

	Weekly sugary food consumption
Lack of interest in activities besides social media use	.112**
Failure to restrict or lessen social media use	.112**

	Weekly fast food consumption
Lack of interest in activities besides social media use	.116**

Disordered Eating and Social Media Use

	Lack of interest in activities besides social media use
Fasting for extended period of time to influence body weight	.076*
Fear of gaining weight	.097**
Loss of control over eating	.098**
Excessive consumption of food in one sitting	.094**
Dissatisfaction with body weight or shape	.112**

Discussion and Conclusion

- Disordered eating and consumption of unhealthy sugary and fast foods were positively correlated with regularly having zero interest in other hobbies due to social media use.
- Consumption of sugary foods was additionally positively correlated to unsuccessful attempts to reduce social media use.
- Individuals who exhibited disordered eating behaviors, such as extended fasting for weight control, loss of eating control, and fear of weight gain were positively correlated with being uninterested with hobbies or other activities due to social media usage.
- Additionally, dissatisfaction with weight and shape was also correlated with this preference for social media over other hobbies and activities.
- These findings suggest a potential link between prioritizing social media over other hobbies and unhealthy eating behaviors and dietary habits. Considering these findings, it is important to educate people about the importance of a balanced diet into daily life.

Future Work and Limitations

- Future work could include how different kinds of social media content specifically affects nutrition and coping mechanisms
- This study was cross sectional, limiting the findings of causal relationships. Using a longitudinal design in the future could determine these relationships
- A cause of potential error was that the data was self reported

References

